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JOHN GARDNER

WASHINGTON, D.C.

AUG

1971

de-moc-ra-cy: government by the people, a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people, and exercised by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.

... Or is it?

Dear Fellow Citizen:

It's time to give this country back to its people. But where do we begin? And how?

Let's begin with ourselves. Right now. For too long we've sat idle while special interests working behind the scenes have shaped America's future almost without reference to the will of the people. Unless it is stopped now, this trend can lead to the eventual total decay of the system we cherish in this country. And none of us, I'm sure, wants that.

Now is the time for all good men and women to come to the aid of themselves -- to join in a citizen's lobby that will look out for the interests of us. You and me. The people.

Now is the time for Common Cause.

Common Cause is a very uncommon organization -- a constructive, independent, non-partisan movement of concerned citizens -- over 200,000 strong and growing! -- determined to help rebuild this nation. We invite you to join us. We are Americans who don't believe that mere complaining gets results. We intend to do something to get this nation back on its course. Many things are wrong. Many things must be done to correct them. And wishing won't make it happen. Action will. Our institutions don't move unless we push them -- and push them hard.

So we're pushing.

... On political campaign spending -- Common Cause has filed a suit against the major political parties for evading the present laws concerning campaign spending ceilings. Uncontrolled campaign spending is a stench in the nostrils of ordinary Americans. It is compromising good men and corrupting weak men. Common Cause is fighting to control it and will continue until we succeed.

... On Congressional reform -- Common Cause was a major factor in making the tyrannical and archaic seniority

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system in Congress a national issue, and is credited by both Congress and the press with helping produce the first real crack in that system.

- ... On voting rights -- Common Cause was the chief citizen organization lobbying for the Constitutional Amendment to give 18-year-olds the right to vote. After the Amendment overwhelmingly passed both the Senate and the House, we fought for ratification state by state. No Amendment was ever ratified more swiftly.
- ... On the Vietnam War -- Common Cause has sought legislative action to name a date certain for withdrawal from Indochina -- and has pursued that goal through an extensive advertising campaign and a television program to bring the message to the people. Common Cause also organized the first effort in the House of Representatives for withdrawal from Indochina.
- ... On the SST -- "Common Cause deserves a world of credit for the tremendous job it played in rallying opposition to the SST and winning the fight." -- Senator William Proxmire
- ... On tax rules -- Together with Ralph Nader and others, we are suing to prevent the Treasury Department from effecting new depreciation regulations which would grant \$39 billion in tax write-offs to a small segment of private industry over the next ten years -- all by White House order with no Congressional hearing or action.

We're lobbying for more effective tools to curb job discrimination ... We're working for reforms whereby rank-and-file party members (rather than "the boys in the back room") will select delegates to the national conventions ... We're directing efforts at state legislatures to break down barriers that limit participation in the election process ... We have worked for reform of the chaotic and unworkable welfare system.

As you have gathered by now, we don't just take positions. We enter into battle. And there are a lot of battles that need to be fought. For more jobs. For lower prices. For better housing.

But I don't need to tell you about the problems. You breathe the dirty air. You see the breakdown in both the administration of justice and in law enforcement. You feel the economic squeeze. Your children attend crowded schools. You pay the cost of inflation.

Let's face it. America today is not the nation it set out to be. And it never can be until we take some tough realistic steps

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to revitalize our institutions.

An impossible dream? Not really. True, in recent years, we have seen all too much complacency, narrow self-interest, meanness of mind and spirit, irrational hatred and fear. But as I travel around this country, I see something else. I see great remaining strength in this nation. I see deeper reserves of devotion and community concern than are now being tapped. I see many, many independent-minded, undefeated, caring, believing Americans who would like to rebuild this nation but don't know how to go about it. These people -- perhaps you are one of them -- are the resource, the only resource, that will heal this nation and set it again on the path to greatness.

Out of the desperate need to unite Americans who care that much, Common Cause was born.

When we first discussed the idea of Common Cause as a citizen's movement to lobby in the public interest, worldly-wise observers tried to tell us it wouldn't work. "The American people are too apathetic," they told us. "Citizen's movements always fail."

They were wrong.

Common Cause is working. New members are joining our ranks at the incredible rate of thousands each week. As Godfrey Sperling, one of Washington's most distinguished journalists, wrote in the Christian Science Monitor, "Common Cause in less than a year has made a significant impact on the government and on those who run the government."

And those who say that citizens' movements always fail just don't know their history. Such movements have been major creative forces in American life that have unquestionably helped mold our destiny. Without them, women wouldn't have the right to vote today and ten-year-old children would still be working in factories. There would be no civil rights movement, no labor movement, no peace movement. None of these came from the bureaucracy or from professional politicians. They welled up out of the people.

Our support is not only large, but enthusiastic. Teenagers are dedicated members of Common Cause. So are their parents. And their grandparents. So are blue collar workers, professional people, servicemen, businessmen, college professors, housewives, hard-hats, conservatives, liberals, rich, poor.

When you've got an organization with that kind of support, you've really got something going for this country!

We believe that the things that unite us as a people are far more important than the things that divide us. What binds us together in our quest is a strong desire to have democracy really work ... a desire to live in a country where the concern of

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government is what is right for the people, not just the special interest groups.

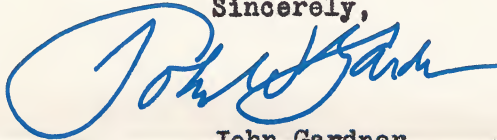
If you are one of the millions of Americans today who feel a sense of powerlessness, frustration and anger over what is happening in and to this country ... if you want to join in the fight to create a society dedicated to the pursuit of peace -- a society in which there is harmony between man and his natural environment -- a society in which technology serves human values -- in which our institutions do not imprison us and limit our decisions and scope -- in which each person is valuable in his own terms -- a society committed to the fulfillment of the individual, to the idea that individual dignity and worth do not depend on race, sex, money, family or status ...

... then join us. We need you. You need Common Cause. As a Member of Common Cause, you do more than lend your financial support to our intensive lobbying efforts for the people. As a Member, you are kept up to date on crucial issues before Congress. If you wish to speak and act in behalf of legislation designed to solve this nation's problems, we show you how to make your voice heard. We ask you what issues you want to see Common Cause focus its efforts on. You are part of a strong, growing core of enlightened citizenry determined to put democracy in this country back on its feet again.

You will find a Common Cause Membership Form enclosed with this letter. I urge you to fill it out, and mail it back today. We won't create a utopia overnight. We don't expect to. But even the longest journey starts with the first step.

Let us take that step together.

Sincerely,



John Gardner
Chairman

JG/js
Encs:

P. S. As a member of Common Cause you will be polled regularly to express your ranking of our national priorities. The democratic will of the members will be followed in determining which issues receive the immediate attention of our staff and the over 200,000 other members.



COMMON CAUSE

2100 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037

Don't just
sit there and
complain--
Let's do
something
to rebuild
America...

"...The aim of Mr. Gardner's effort is not to found a new party or win a particular campaign. His hope is to freshen the springs of political life, to recruit new talent for both parties and at every level of government, to concentrate attention on the issues that are genuinely significant, to sponsor needed reforms. It is a bold and ambitious undertaking which Mr. Gardner and his colleagues are attempting. Self-government lives by that kind of boldness and ambition."

—*The New York Times*

"... At this point all that can be said is that Common Cause in less than a year has made a significant impact on the government and on those who run the government." —Godfrey Sperling, *Christian Science Monitor*

"... Gardner has perceived something few politicians are willing to admit publicly: disillusionment with 'the system' is not confined to the college youths or radicals or blacks. Much of educated, affluent, middle-class America is equally turned off by government and politics today, distrustful of the ability or willingness of elected officials to meet the problems that plague America. As much as anything, Gardner is seeking to revive a hope and confidence in them..."

—David Broder, *The Washington Post*

"... We wish John Gardner well—because we wish the country well. He and his recruits from all segments of American life just possibly might be able to achieve some actions that desperately need achieving..."

—*The Asheville Times*



When John Gardner, Chairman of Common Cause, served as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington, D. C., he became convinced that only an aroused, enlightened and organized citizenry can revitalize our battered, time-worn institutions. Former educator, former Carnegie Corporation President, his concern led him to take on the important role as Chairman of the National Urban Coalition. Now, as Chairman of Common Cause, he is involved in one of the most important pursuits of our time—to return this country to its people...to make our government more responsive to the needs of the nation and the will of its citizens.



COMMON CAUSE

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Washington, D.C.

You are invited to join forces with Common Cause... a “Citizen’s Lobby” of the people, by the people and for the people.

It’s time to act—and *act in unison*. Too many of our elected officials have turned a deaf ear to the wishes of the people and our isolated voices have gone unheeded. In unity we shall find strength. And in Common Cause we have found unity.

Common Cause is the national non-partisan citizen’s group with over 200,000 members, lobbying in the public interest at all levels of government. “Lobbying” is not a dirty word. It is a legitimate part of our political process, a right granted to all of us in the “right to petition” clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution. *And it’s about time we had a “Citizen’s Lobby” to petition for the people, not the special interest groups.*

The concern of Common Cause is issues, not political parties or candidates. We are a third force,

not a third party. Our members are forward-looking Democrats, Republicans and Independents seeking to improve our institutions so that the decisions of our federal agencies and the actions of Congress and state and city legislatures are truly in the public interest and reflect the will of the people.

Among our aims...

...to overhaul and revitalize our government institutions...to withdraw American forces from Indochina...to provide equal opportunity for all...to preserve the environment...to eliminate poverty...to provide everyone with decent housing...to improve our education system...to provide necessary job skills...to overhaul our health system...to protect the consumer...to plan carefully for population growth...to sustain economic growth...to achieve more effective ways of dealing with lawlessness...to improve urban transportation.

They sound like lofty goals. But Common Cause has proven in its first year of life that those goals can be translated into specific legislative battles. And the battles can be fought—and often won. But not without your help. Concerned citizen participation is the very lifeblood of a democratic society, and unless we—the people—work toward solving its problems, most of those problems will remain with us, if not worsen.

How much is it worth to you to have 200,000 allies and a team of lobbyists working year-round to try to solve these problems, in Washington, D. C. and throughout the country? \$100? \$50? Annual membership in Common Cause is \$15. As a Common Cause Member, you join forces with a strong growing team of concerned Americans eager to support lobbying efforts in behalf of the people. In addition, you receive the *Common Cause Report from Washington* 10 times a year, as well as *Time to Act* bulletins—keeping you up to date on crucial issues before Congress and enabling you to speak and act in behalf of legislation that affects you, your family, your job and your future.

With our large and determined membership, we hope to create a better, more united America. Won’t you join us.

Common Cause Membership Form

I would like to become an Active Member of Common Cause, for which I am enclosing \$15 annual dues. I understand that as a Member

...I am helping support Common Cause’s extensive lobbying efforts in behalf of the people and

...I will receive the *Common Cause Report from Washington** 10 times a year, as well as *Time to Act* bulletins keeping me up to date on crucial issues before Congress and how to speak and act in behalf of legislation that affects me, my family, my job and my future.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Telephone number _____

☐ To help even more, my check includes—in addition to my membership dues—an additional contribution of: \$100___ \$50___ \$30___ \$20___ \$15___ \$10___ Other _____

☐ I prefer to be billed

*\$2 of your dues is allocated to the cost of the *Report from Washington* subscription.

Please make checks payable to “Common Cause.”

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